

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 OMB-01 EB-08 /087 W

-----281002Z 006162 /12

P R 280900Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7672

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MANILA 4528

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, RP, LY, XF

SUBJECT: MARCOS PROCLAIMS AUTONOMY IN 13 PROVINCES

REF: MANILA 4461

1. SUMMARY. ON MARCH 26 PRESIDENT MARCOS SIGNED PROCLAMATION GRANTING "AUTONOMY" TO THIRTEEN PROVINCES AND ESTABLISHING PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OR GOVERNMENTS IN REGION (WHETHER SINGULAR OR PLURAL--ONE FOR EACH PROVINCE--MAY NOT BE CLEAR UNTIL TEXT IS RELEASED). DUTIES OF PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT WILL BE TO PREPARE FOR APRIL 17 "REFERENDUM" (VICE APRIL 17 PLEBISCITE). IT NOW SEEMS CLEAR THAT HAVING ACCEDED TO MNLF-LIBYAN DEMANDS FOR 13 PROVINCE AUTONOMY WITHOUT PRIOR PLEBISCITE, MARCOS FALL BACK POSITION WILL BE TO USE APRIL 17 VOTING EXERCISE AS MEANS OF EXPRESSING "PEOPLES DEMAND" FOR MINIMAL TYPE OF
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AUTONOMY UNDER FIRM AUTHORITY OF GOP, RATHER THAN MAXIMUM VARIETY UNDER MNLF. PRESIDENT SCHEDULED TO EXPLAIN MATTERS FURTHER IN MARCH 29 PRESS CONFERENCE. END SUMMARY.

2. I WAS CALLED TO DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS BY UNDER SECRETARY COLLANTES AT NOON MARCH 28 TO RECEIVE TEXT OF PRESS RELEASE ON TRIPOLI AGREEMENT (ALREADY

REPORTED REFTEL) AND TO "BRIEF" ME ON DEVELOPMENTS IN LIBYAN-MNLF NEGOTIATIONS. COLLANTES, OF COURSE, HAS ONLY THE VAGUEST IDEA OF THE ACTUAL STATE OF PLAY. NEVERTHELESS, THE BRIEFING WAS INTENDED TO BE A GESTURE TO OUR ALLIANCE. SIMILAR BRIEFINGS WERE GIVEN TO THE ASEAN AMBASSADORS, THE SAUDI ARABIAN AND THE EGYPTIAN.

3. COLLANTES DAIS THAT "PROCLAMATION" HAS BEEN ISSUED CREATING "AUTONOMUS REGION" AND ALSO ESTABLISHING INTERIM GOVERNMENTS (SIC) FOR PROVINCES CONTAINED IN REGION. I ASKED IF TEXT OF PROCLAMATION WAS AVAILABLE. HE SAID HE HAD NOT SEEN IT BUT ASSUMED IT WOULD BE PUBLISHED.

4. I SAID I HAD JUST COME FROM MEETING WITH 28 GOVERNORS INCLUDING SEVERAL OF THOSE WHOSE PROVINCES COVERED BY PROCLAMATION. I REPORTED CONSIDERABLE CONFUSION AMONG THEM ABOUT THEIR STATUS. COLLANTES SAID GOP WAS CONSULTING QADHAFI ABOUT COMPOSITION OF PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENTS (SIC) AND WOULD SOON ANNOUNCE MEMBERS.

5. I ASKED WHETHER PLEBISCITE WOULD TAKE PLACE AS SCHEDULED APRIL 17. COLLANTES SAID IT WOULD BE CALLED A "REFERENDUM", AND POINTED OUT THAT REFERENDUM IS ADVISORY WHILE PLEBISCITE IS BINDING. HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT RESULTS WOULD BE ANNOUNCED IMMEDIATELY AFTER VOTING. I POINTED OUT THAT THIS WOULD BE WELL BEFORE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE AND THAT THE RESULTS OF THE VOTE WOULD DOUBTLESS EXACERBATE THE LIBYANS, WHO WOULD BE HOSTING THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE IN MAY.
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6. COLLANTES SAID GOP AWARE OF THIS PROSPECT AND THAT WAS WHY SAUDI ARABIA AND EGYPT BEING BRIEFED. I SAID IT SEEMED TO ME THAT IRAN AND KUWAIT WERE ALSO IMPORTANT, PARTICULARLY IF LIBYA CALLS FOR AN OIL BOYCOTT. COLLANTES SEEMED TO TAKE THE POINT.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MANILA 4528

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7. ACCORDING PRESS OF MARCH 27 PRESIDENT MARCOS
SIGNED PROCLAMATION WHICH A) GRANTS AUTONOMY TO 13 PRO-
VINCES IN SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES, AND B) CREATES SINGLE
"COMMISSION TYPE" REGIONAL GOVERNMENT WITH REPRESENTATIVES
FROM MNLF AND OTHER GROUPS. BOTH PROVISIONS DESCRIBED
AS IN ACCORDANCE WITH QADHAFT'S "FORMULA". DUTIES OF
PROVISIONSAL GOVERNMENTS DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS:

- 1) TO PREPARE FOR REFERENDUM;
- 2) TO PREPARE FOR ELECTION OF REGIONAL ASSEMBLY;
- 3) TO ADMINISTER REGION IN ACCORDANCE WITH EXISTING
LAWS AND POLICIES;
- 4) TO EXERCISE OTHER POWERS AS PRESIDENT MAY DIRECT.

8. ACCORDING PRESS OF MARCH 28, PROCLAMATION HAS
RESULTED IN "CLAMOR" FROM MINDANAO FOR CONSULTATION
ON NATURE OF AUTONOMOUS REGION. IN VIEW OF CHANGED
CIRCUMSTANCES, CONCERNED CITIZENS ARE ALLEGEDLY DEMAND-
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ING THAT APRIL 17 REFERENDUM DETERMINE WHETHER PEOPLE
DESIRE PROPOSED AUTONOMOUS REGION TO REMAIN UNDER THE
NATIONAL GOVERNMENT, OR UNDER MNLF. SPECIFIC QUESTIONS
PROPOSED INCLDE A) WHETHER REGION SHOULD HAVE OWN
FLAG, OFFICIAL LANGUAGE AND SEAL DISTINCT FROM REPUBLIC
OF PHILIPPINES; B) WHETHER INHABITANTS SHOULD BE CALLED
"BANGSA MORO" OR FILIPINOS; :) WHETHER THEY WANT AUTONOMOUS
REGION TO HAVE OWN COURT SYSTEM, DIRECT TAXATION BY
REGIONAL AUTHORITIES, DIRECT LEGISLATION BY REGIONAL
AUTHORITIES, SPECIAL SECURITY FORCES, OWN CHIEF
MINISTER, ETC. SECRETARY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROMULO
REPORTED AS SAYING THERE IS NEED FOR "INTENSIFIED

INFORMATION DRIVE" ON NEW QUESTIONS. LATEST PUBLICITY DOES NOT SUGGEST THAT VOTERS WILL BE ABLE TO QUESTION EXISTENCE OF REGION COMPOSED OF THIRTEEN PROVINCES WHICH PRESUMABLY HENCEFORTH TO BE REGARDED AS FAIR ACCOMPLI.

9. INITIAL EDITORIAL REACTION TO QADHAFI "FORMULA" DISPLAYED UNUSUAL QUESTIONING TONE. EDITORIAL IN MARCH 27 BULLETIN TODAY SAID ANNOUNCEMENT CAME "LIKE A BLAST OF CHILL AIR AND STIRRED QUESTIONS WHETHER THIS NATION HAD FINALLY AGREED TO DISMEMBER ITSELF". EDITORIAL CONCLUDED "PEACE WITH HONOR--NO MATTER HOW BRIEF IT WILL LAST--HAS BEEN ASSURED.Z COLUMNIST TANEDO OF TIMES JOURNAL DISCUSSED MUSLIM PROBLEM IN CONTEXT OF ENDEMIC ETHNIC UNREST IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, QUOTING YEATS, "THINGS FALL APART; THE CENTER CANNOT HOLD".

10. PRESIDENT STILL SCHEDULED TO OFFER FURTHER EXPLANATION OF LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN TELEVISED NEWS CONFERENCE AND TELEPHONE "TALKATHON" AT 4P.M. LOCAL TIME MARCH 29.

11. COMMENT: THE CAT IS NOW FAIRLY OUT OF THE BAG. CONTRARY TO PRESIDENT'S REPEATED EARLIER ASSURANCES, HE HAS AUTHORIZED AUTONOMY FOR 13 PROVINCES DEMANDED BY MNLF
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WITHOUT PRIOR PLEBISCITE. GOP'S REVISED STRATEGY FROM HERE ON OUT APPEARS CLEAR ENOUGH. MARCOS CANNOT RENEGE ON THIRTEEN PROVINCE REGION WITHOUT BLATANTLY CONTRAVENING AGREEMENT WITH QADHAFI. WHAT HE CAN DO IS USE APRIL 17 VOTING TO ARTICULATE "PEOPLE'S DEMAND" FOR MINIMAL AUTONOMY UNDER CLEAR GOP AUTHORITY, AS OPPOSED TO MAXIMUM AUTONOMY DEMANDED BY MNLF. AS NOTED IN EARLIER REPORTING CHANCES ARE GOOD THAT MNLF WILL AT SOME POINT TAKE VIGOUROUS EXCEPTION TO THESE TACTICS. WE ARE NOT SURE WHY MARCOS PROCLAIMED RATHER THAN DECREED AUTONOMY BUT SINCE DECLARATION OF MARTIAL LAW IN 1972 WAS BY PROCLAMATION (NOT DECREE) EITHER TECHNIQUE IS APPARENTLY EFFECTIVE. WILL COMMENT FURTHER AFTER MARCH 29 "TALKATHON" AND TEXT OF PROCLAMATION AVAILABLE.
SULLIVAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, GOVERNMENT REFORM, RELIGIOUS GROUPS, SELFGOVERNMENT, PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
Control Number: n/a
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
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